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SUBJECT: SEIZED HAMAS DOCUMENTS OFFER POTENTIAL INSIGHT
INTO POLITICAL STRATEGY AND FUTURE BEHAVIOR

Classified By: Consul General Daniel Rubinstein, per reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (S) Summary and comment. Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF) seized four documents during the raid of a Hamas-affiliated think tank in Nablus in late September 2009.

The documents were drafted by Nablus-based Hamas leaders and Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) members in early September, and may only represent this sector's thinking. The papers outline a strategy of cooperating with the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Arab states on broad, long-term goals -- such as national reconciliation and elections -- while undermining those goals by attaching unattainable conditions, or by working clandestinely against the goals.

¶2. (S) Summary and comment continued. To the extent that these documents accurately reflect Hamas leaders' strategy, they imply that Hamas may pursue tactical shifts in reconciliation talks in order to shift responsibility for stalling reconciliation to President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazin) and the PA, and to defer elections and buy time to pursue other options. Such a scenario could place Abbas in the awkward position of either accepting a flawed reconciliation agreement with no hope of success, or accepting blame for rejecting reconciliation.

¶3. (S) Summary cont. The first of the four documents which follow describes Hamas's options in the event that PA President Mahmud Abbas calls for elections in January 2010; it lays out political moves and a media campaign designed to stall the elections until conditions ripen for a Hamas victory. The second document sets out strategies for Hamas to deal with Fatah, by seeking dialogue based on "mutual interests," while at the same time trying to foster a rift within Fatah. The third document discusses Hamas's options if negotiations resume, and steps that Hamas can take in the near future to strengthen its position within that context. Both the second and third documents mention the possibility of encouraging resistance in the West Bank. The fourth document deals with reconciliation talks, saying that Hamas should go along with the talks to avoid taking blame for their failure, at the same time maintaining Hamas's red lines regarding elections and power sharing. End summary and comment.

¶4. (S) Following is a lightly edited translation of the first document:

WHAT IS REQUIRED WITH REGARD TO THE IDEA OF
PRESIDENT ABBAS CALLING FOR ELECTIONS UNILATERALLY

All indications suggest that Abbas will call for presidential and legislative elections with whoever is present, the same way he held the Fatah Congress and the National Council. Some don't agree, however, because the ideal scenario for Abbas is to have Hamas's blessing to end the current

situation. Under this scenario, Abbas will unilaterally call for elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as follows:

¶1. Announce the elections on their scheduled date, January 25, with a full proportional representation system. (Post Note: This document was prepared in early September, before Hamas and Fatah separately shifted their positions towards a June 25, 2010 election date. End note.)

¶2. Whether the movement prevents the elections in the Gaza Strip or not, the results will be announced and Fatah will be the winner. It is likely that they will declare Gaza a rebellious territory and take military, political, economic, and financial steps. Therefore, there should be an initiative and a political move by Hamas.

-- It is possible to declare that the elections are illegitimate since they are happening without an agreement. In tandem, resistance should be enhanced.

-- The choice here is between bad and worse -- reject the elections or accept the elections. In a case such as this, the decision should be based on the balance of power on the ground and not the force of law.

-- Abbas insists on elections on their scheduled date, in order to achieve his and Fatah's interests, and regional and international interests. Hamas's interests are in providing conducive prerequisites before holding the elections, to ensure their victory.

Rejecting the elections requires Hamas to:

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(a) to secure the necessary funds for the government to continue and strengthen its role and power;

(b) to garner other countries' support for Hamas's position, i.e., rejecting the elections. This is a vulnerability for the movement and therefore, it requires tremendous political efforts;

(c) to develop an extremely compelling and persuasive media message.

Proposed mechanisms to avoid elections and confront Abbas's scenario through the media:

(a) Declare that we accept elections in principle and demand the following:
(i) the preparation of the necessary climate;
(ii) the release of detainees;
(iii) the restoration of Hamas's organizations which were closed in the West Bank;
(iv) a guarantee of the integrity of the outcome of the elections;
(v) guarantees for Hamas candidates' freedom of movement, to allow them to hold their electoral campaigns;
(vi) a guarantee to abide by the elections results;
(vii) participation in selecting members of the CEC and its decision making bodies;
(viii) lifting the siege;
(ix) a period of a number of months of no siege to start the reconstruction process.

(b) Alternative Scenario: accept the elections, but:
(i) on the condition that PA elections occur simultaneous to the PLO/PNC elections.
(ii) beginning beforehand to implement the Cairo/PLO 2005 agreement.
(iii) ending Fatah's monopoly on leading the PLO (Chairman of the Executive Committee, Chairman of the National Council; the majority).

(c) Another alternative scenario: accept the elections, but:

(i) if the elections take place in the West Bank without consensus, we will hold elections in Gaza, employing the constituency system, for the position of presidential and PLC members, or for the PLC only. (The ensuing crisis will create a conflict to be followed by a new dialogue to reach an agreement. The elections would stimulate other figures and factions to participate);

(ii) if the elections are scheduled for January 25, 2010, without consensus, the PLC should convene and announce the impeachment of Mahmud Abbas based on incapacitation for two reasons:

-- His term expired a year ago, and his actions are illegal according to the Basic Law.

-- The formation of Fayyad's government is illegal. There is a risk if the elections are held in the West Bank only, while the situation in the Gaza Strip remains the same without taking any new steps.

Confronting the upcoming stage requires:

(i) the formation of a public coalition (alliance) with other factions which oppose Abbas's vision and support Hamas's demands.

(ii) applying pressure by Palestinian factions from outside the Gaza strip.

It is suggested that Hamas propose an initiative summarized as follows: "To hold general elections based on an agreed upon arrangement in Gaza and the West Bank, to include security details, providing conducive circumstances, starting with releasing all prisoners.⁸ Once negotiations on such a proposal commence, to procrastinate agreement beyond the date set for elections.

15. (S) Following is a lightly edited translation of the second document:

RELATIONS WITH FATAH FOLLOWING ITS SIXTH GENERAL CONGRESS

-- The winning current in Fatah elections is that of Abbas.

-- This leadership is responsive to Obama's policy of peaceful settlement.

-- The Fatah congress was met with Arab support, specifically Egyptian, Saudi, and Jordanian.

-- Newly elected leaders have expressed an interest in holding dialogue with Hamas.

-- The Central Committee has former security officials who

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coordinated closely with the occupation.

-- There are international and regional factors that affect Fatah's decision making.

-- A split in Fatah is ruled out in the opinion of some, and is still possible in other options while it is probable in the opinion of others.

-- The policy of Fatah is that of compromise and following the Roadmap.

-- Fatah has been strengthened organizationally after the congress but it is politically weaker.

-- The new Central Committee has the goal of reassuming charge and eliminating Hamas from the political scene.

Organizing relations with Fatah:

-- Dealing with Fatah on the basis of common interests and political partnership;

-- Dealing with Fatah through the Central Committee as a collective leadership, while taking into account the differences among Committee members and taking advantage of these differences;

-- Working to undermine Fatah politically by the use of mass media. There are names in Fatah's leadership that are easy to attack given their dark history (in the security and political fields);

-- It is necessary to invigorate the resistance in the West Bank using all possible means;

-- Maintaining side channels of communications with Fatah in

an organized fashion.

What is required of Hamas?

First: To deal with the winning current in Fatah on the following basis:

- (1) Genuine mutual interests and partnership
- (2) Reforming the PLO
- (3) Democratic mechanisms
- (4) Rejection of political arrests and security cooperation
- (5) Caution of meeting or dealing with Dahlan and/or Tirawi, given the negative impact of such encounter on our bases.

Second: To work with the losing current and to enhance its role. We should not be discouraged by the weakness and lack of international support to this current. This is vital for affecting a split (within Fatah). Relations with Fatah should not be separated from relations with the PLO.

- (1) To declare clearly and unequivocally that the PLO does not represent the will of the Palestinian people inside or outside the homeland
- (2) To seriously consider to create a parallel body with other factions through proper coordination
- (3) To enhance relations with factions
- (4) To enhance communications with civil society organizations

¶6. (S) Following is a lightly edited translation of the third document:

HAMAS'S OPTIONS IN THE COMING PHASE

The next few months may witness a re-launch of the peace process, with or without Palestinian reconciliation. All parties, including the US, are interested in having a Palestinian consensus and reconciliation in order to ensure the success of the settlement scheme and provide Palestinian and Arab support for it. The continuation of the current circumstances is especially tough, particularly in terms of exhausting Hamas's capabilities and resources in providing relief service and provision of medications, fuel and food. In addition, while Hamas faces increasing pressure, the people's priorities may shift towards improvement in daily living conditions at the expense of national aspirations.

The movement's options in the upcoming phase depend on a few probable scenarios. It is expected that the movement will face more pressure in the time ahead to force concessions and give a room for Fatah to re-emerge. In light of the movement's inability in the foreseeable future to achieve any break-through in terms of the conflict, and having to wait for certain variables inside and outside the homeland, we propose the following:

- (1) To hold a comprehensive evaluation of the past four years and hold workshops in the different sectors and working groups.
- (2) To enhance internal relations within the movement.
- (3) To enhance relations and community outreach efforts to strengthen citizenry steadfastness through profound dialogue and the presentation of exemplary behavior (by Hamas leaders).
- (4) To re-launch resistance in the occupied West Bank.

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(5) To work with the external forces and among the expatriate Palestinian communities in order to increase pressure, while facing the settlement scheme and the preparations thereof.

(6) To open official channels at the Islamic and Arab organizations to support resistance.

(7) To create additional plans to face the siege.

(8) To enhance relations with other factions toward building coalitions.

(9) To fully prepare for elections, whether they take place according to a national consensus agreement or not.

(10) To maintain the calm arrangement in the Gaza Strip and, at the same time, prepare for a possible confrontation with

the occupation.

- (11) To promote internal building and political thinking in line with political developments in the region.
- (12) To continue working and holding dialogue with the West on the basis of international acceptance.
- (13) To prepare a political platform that we will carry forward and to reconsider it in light of developments.
- (14) To finalize the prisoner exchange deal.
- (15) To end the division and enhance prospects of reconciliation.
- (16) To develop a strategy for the reconstruction process.
- (17) To enhance relations with other factions by creating a unified resistance and opposition reference.

¶7. (S) Following is a lightly edited translation of the fourth document:

SCENARIOS FOR NATIONAL DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION IN THE UPCOMING ROUND

An evaluation of the previous round of dialogue:

- (1) Fatah was not serious in previous rounds. Fatah did not approach Hamas on the basis of partnership in decision making and giving Hamas political representation that matches its popularity.
- (2) Egypt was not serious about putting pressure on Fatah to ensure success of the dialogue.
- (3) Abbas and regional players -- including Egypt and Saudi Arabia -- and international parties did not want Hamas as a key player in Palestinian political decision making bodies. They sought to eliminate Hamas's political role and its role in the PLC.
- (4) Egypt supports Fatah's design to leave the topics of the dialogue open while pushing for an agreement on elections only, allowing the next government to deal with the other files.

-- There is no harm in maintaining dialogue so that Hamas is not accused of blocking reconciliation efforts. Hamas should develop and intensify media messaging with the effect that Hamas supports resistance while Fatah gives in to compromises, and present the conflict in that context.

-- It is necessary to develop a clear and simply worded message to the public on the various stages of the dialogue.

-- We refuse any agreement on elections alone in separation from other topics.

-- Present Hamas's future vision while going along with Egypt without making compromises.

-- Explore the possibility of having a direct dialogue with Fatah, without Egyptian or Arab sponsorship.

-- Ensure that in the first future session of talks that no unilateral Fatah steps are taken with respect to elections.

-- We should not wait for a next move from Egypt, but take the lead and present an initiative on all issues of the dialogue. We should then wait for others to be in a reactionary position.

RUBINSTEIN